

THE IMPRESSIVE VOICE OF THE SILENCED FEMALE POETS IN ROMANTICISM

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ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to examine the Marginalized female poets of the Romantic period. Society during this period made it unimaginable for ladies to make any progression. Women were extremely limited inside their classes and were considerably more confined in the work place. At this time, women were victims of society as they had limitations. It explores the changes that happened in the period and investigation the presence of women in literature of the era. It is a qualitative analytical paper exploring marginalized women in English Literature. It is focused on exploration of female voice and the legacy of Romantic women in Literature as poets. It studies the challenges and problems that women confronted and talks about their silent character at that time. This paper attempts to examine how women writers and poets of Romantic period were silenced and neglected and their influence on English Literature.

KEYWORDS: Romanticism, Women Status, Women Poets, Feminism, Silence

Article History

Received: 01 Nov 2021 / Revised: 06 Nov 2021 / Accepted: 13 Nov 2021

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Romanticism era was a new beginning in England in a way that when Blake was born in 1757, England had an agricultural society and by the death of Blake in 1827, England was an industrial country. The power of England started from aristocracy society and continued to a new class of industrial employers, and the common English people were in the group of industrial working class as well. In Romantic age, new events were happening in the world. William Blake wrote “a new heaven is begun”; Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote “The world’s great age begins anew”, and John Keat wrote “These, these will give the world another heart/and other pulses”. The ideal of freedom was being extended to every range of human endeavour and that ideal swept through Europe. Individual thought, personal feelings and unique experience were new roles in Romantic poetry, and it knows the poet as a spokesman of society. This paper attempts to examine how women writers and poets of Romantic period - “a new heaven”, “The world’s great age”, another heart/and other pulses - were silenced and neglected to make sure about a spot among their male partners.

DISCUSSIONS

In Romantic poetry, the poet is seen as an individual distinguished from his fellows and he/she writes poems by their own minds. Romantic poetry concentrates on feeling and its language is also the language of ordinary people, and Wordsworth writes in the 1800 *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* that poetry is at once “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (126-7) and “emotion recollected in tranquillity” (148-9). In Romantic poetry, the poet expresses his/her emotions in the superlative way and it is a move from imitative norms of the Neoclassical age to a new stress on imagination. Stress on judgment in

poetry relates to the form, “If poetry must be spontaneous, it should also be fashioned primarily according to the dictates of the creative imagination. About this point Wordsworth states that “You feel strongly; trust to those feelings, and your poem will take its shape and proportions as a tree does from the vital principle that actuates it” (Media, 1969, 439).

According to Jacques Barzun there were three generations of Romantic artists. The first emerged in the 1790s and 1800s, the second in the 1820s, and the third later in the century (469).

In the realm of ethics, politics, aesthetics it was the authenticity and sincerity of the pursuit of inner goals that mattered; this applied equally to individuals and groups—states, nations, movements. This is most evident in the aesthetics of romanticism, where the notion of eternal models, a Platonic vision of ideal beauty, which the artist seeks to convey, however imperfectly, on canvas or in sound, is replaced by a passionate belief in spiritual freedom, individual creativity. The painter, the poet, the composer do not hold up a mirror to nature, however ideal, but invent; they do not imitate (the doctrine of mimesis), but create not merely the means but the goals that they pursue; these goals represent the self-expression of the artist's own unique, inner vision, to set aside which in response to the demands of some "external" voice—church, state, public opinion, family friends, arbiters of taste—is an act of betrayal of what alone justifies their existence for those who are in any sense creative. (Berlin, 2013, 60) the most significant characteristics of Romantic poetry are feelings of empathy, reverence for people of the lower economic classes, people are commonly good even though society can be cruel and humiliating, a love of nature drawing inspiration from the rural area and other rural landscapes, emphasis on showing feelings, not beating emotions, deep interest in the irrational, the supernatural and horror, and imagination is a rare gift that grasps the moment.

In the ages before Romantic era, there was a neglect of women's experience in the literary canon, neglect that took the form of distorting and misreading the few recognized female writers and excluding the others. The existence of male authors in the literary canon represented that the female character was a silent character for generations as the male-dominated membership was accepted in this canon. Burke in the presence of canonized forefather notes that “Start with the Great Books, the traditional desert-island ones, the foundation of courses in the Western humanistic tradition:

No women authors, of course, at all, but within the works thus canonized, certain monumental female images: Helen, Penelope, and Clytemnestra, Beatrice and the Dark Lady of the Sonnets, Berenice, Cunegonde, and Margarete. The list of interesting female characters is enlarged if we shift to the Survey of English Literature and its classic texts; here, moreover, there is the possible inclusion of a female author or even several, at least as the course's implicit "historical background" ticks through and past the Industrial Revolution. (Warhol and Herndl, 1997, 116)

In Romantic period, there were also some women who wrote biography or memoirs like Hutchinson and Bradstreet who represented awareness of the political issues in the civil war, “including complains about the slowness of justice, the abuses of the Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission and the debate over royal prerogative” (Staves, 2006, 45)

Aemilia Bassano Lanier, also spelled Lanyer (1569-1645), a possible candidate for the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's Sonnets and the heroine of *The Dark Lady's Mask*, was the first English woman to aspire to a career as a qualified poet by vigorously seeking a circle of well-known female patrons to backing her:

She praises these women in the dedicatory verses of her epic poem, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, a vindication of the rights of women couched in religious verse and published in 1611. Her elegiac poem “The Description of Cooke-ham”

might be the first country house poem in the English language. Committed to women's advancement and education, she served as tutor to the young Lady Anne Clifford, then went on to found her own school for girls in 1617, a very progressive innovation in an era when girls were barred from most formal education. (Sharratt)

Charlotte Smith was not the only significant woman Romantic poet in this period; Helen Maria Williams' *Poems* (1786), she was a British poet, novelist, and essayist, known for her support of abolitionism and the French Revolution; Ann Batten Cristall, early Romantic poet who wrote *Poetical Sketches* (1795), Mary Robinson, an English poet, dramatist, and novelist, who wrote *Sappho and Phaon* (1796); and Mary Tighe, an Anglo-Irish poet, whose family published the posthumous edition of *Psyche* (1805).

Anne Locke (1530 -1590) was the first women to write a sonnet sequence in the English language. Locke's *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner* (1560) contains 26 sonnets inspired by Psalm 51. They were published in her volume of translations of Jean Calvin's sermons and dedicated to her great friend Catherine Willoughby, the Duchess of Suffolk.

Elizabeth Cary (1585-1639) at the age of seventeen became the first English woman to write a full-length original play, *The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*, which was not published until 1613. Though widely read and circulated, the play was never performed on stage during Cary's lifetime. A creative poet and translator, only two of her other scripts survive, a prose biography, *The History of Edward II*; and a translation from the French of *The Reply of the Most Illustrious Cardinall of Perron*.

Mary Sidney (1569-1624), poet, playwright, and translator, was one of the first English women to achieve literary fame. Sister of the poet Philip Sidney, she finished her brother's book of poetic meditations on the Psalms after his death. Her 1592 closet drama *Antonius*, a translation from the French of Robert Garnier's play *Marc Antoine*, was a major influence on Shakespeare's play *Antony and Cleopatra*. She was one of Aemilia Bassano Lanier's noble patrons and was praised in Lanier's poetry as an enthroned goddess attended by the Muses.

Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1651), Mary Sidney's niece, was the first English woman to write a full-length work of fiction, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), which follows the fortunes of two female protagonists. *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* caused a great scandal, as its critics believed it to be a roman-a-clef criticizing Queen Anne. Wroth was also the first English woman to write an important body of secular poetry, including her sequence of 103 sonnets, *Pamphilia to Amphilathus*. In addition, she wrote a five-act pastoral drama, *Love's Victory*. Only in recent years has her innovative work begun to attract the attention it merits.

Isobel Armstrong repeats that male and female poets are dissimilar; the interests of the women poets don't have the same intertextual relations as those of the male poets:

Marlon Ross claims that "the female poets who publish so successfully in the early nineteenth century necessarily wrestle with similar conflicts as their male counterparts, but their gender is so crucial a factor in their cultural and literary experience that it alters the effect of shared social conditions and turns these writers into a distinct class, with its own ideological patterning, rather than merely a species of the overarching class of romantic poets. (Linkin, and Behrendt, 2014, 26)

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759 –1797) is, "a political theorist in her own right, and also an early activist for women's rights" (Miskelly and Noce 3). She strongly raises her voice against the patriarchal domination over females. She firmly holds her belief that mind does not know sex and answers the attacked charged by male writers.

It is claimed that when it came to criticism, aesthetic criticism in particular, the principal women critics insisted that literature's cultural role is "to educate even more than to delight, to educate by teaching readers to take delight in the triumph of moral benevolence, sexual self-control, and rational intelligence" (Mellor 18). This formulation signifies the variances among women's literary, critical, intellectual and social experiences, and there was not any critical perseverance on separation of female poets from the male ones.

In Romantic period, most of the poems were "with the themes whose common thread was socio-political in nature and they were about impoverishment, societal displacement, the influences on families and societies of war-making" (Linkin, and Behrendt, 2014, 30). The parallels were as well as the mixture of sympathy and outrage which were activated by spiritual and emotional imagination, and they also relate to the delights and the sorrows of others by quite literally experiencing those feelings themselves. The oppositional usages of the rhetoric of sentimentality, which continue virtually persistent throughout most of the Regency, are especially obvious in antiwar poetry of the era by women and men alike, much of it replicating the rebellious posture characteristic of popular Radicalism.

Alienation and exclusion are characteristics which govern Romantic poetry written by women during this period that even are represented in the titles of the poems like Robinson's "The Exile: Lyrical Tales and Dacre's Hours of Solitude". Social outcasts such as widows and abandoned women who are often mothers with dying children that the deaths of their children made them despair and madness. However, women were accepted as poets in public when they confined themselves, as Felicia Hemans did in her first major volume, to "domestic affections", which included not only household affairs and family life but also the education and morality of children: thus the astonishing success of efforts like those of Ann and Jane Taylor in this latter area. Jane West's *Miscellaneous Poetry* in 1786 "her long five-part poem on mothers, motherhood and mothering won approving comments even when her poetic skills themselves were candidly deprecated in the press" (Linkin, and Behrendt 34). Moreover, strong sense, maternal, patriotic and Christian feeling are the characteristics of this poem, and this poem is grounded in sensibility and the Human complex of sympathy associated with it and addressed to the sensibilities of its readers. This poem is exactly the sort of a poem that a woman is expected to write and the female author's exclusion from classical education and from the accurate vocabulary of classical reference and allusion.

Women's poems are different from male's ones and this issue is represented in the educated male poets like Thomas Campbell's *The Pleasures of Hope*, popular country person Robert Bloomfield's *The Farmer's Boy* and Charles Hoyle's *Exodus; An Epic Poem*. In 1798, the poet, and novelist Mary Robinson published "Thoughts on the Condition of Women, and on the Injustice of Mental Subordination." She finishes her letter with a declaration of the female literary tradition. "There are men who affect, to think light of the literary productions of women; and yet no works of the present day are so universally read as theirs." The last sentences of her piece become almost prophetic:

I am well assured that it will meet with little serious attention from the MALE disciples of MODERN PHILOSOPHY. The critics, though they have liberally patronized the works of British women, will perhaps condemn that doctrine which inculcates mental equality; lest, by the intellectual labours of the sex, they should claim an equal portion of power in the TRIBUNAL of BRITISH LITERATURE. (39)

The 19th century is a long literary age noticeable by exceptional literary accomplishments of women authors and women poets. It is a fact that the commencement of 19th century witnessed numerous female authors such as Anne Finch, Anne Elliot and Emily Bronte Queen's looking glass, the old silent dance of death became a dance of triumph, a dance into

speech, a dance of authority.” (Gilbert and Gubar 44). This quiet dance was what they loved, and it was “Emily Brontë [who] chose to [enjoy the silence] when she hid her poems in kitchen cabinets (Gilbert and Gubar, 2020, 83).

The woman poet of the Romantic era, progress with slow movements in anonymity, dreadful of putting her name before the public of being seen and known as an author, publishing book after book in disguise or under the veil of “by a lady”, or using some other manoeuvre to keep her true personality secret. With remarkably few exceptions, female poets who published poetry books proudly placed their real names on the title page from the very beginning of their careers:

Such was the case with Lucy Aikin, Mathilda Betham, Felicia Hemans, Mary Howitt, Mary Leadbeater, Mary Russell Mitford, Hannah More, Amelia Opie, Sydney Owenson, Mary Robinson, Anna Seward, Charlotte Smith, Agnes Strickland, Ann Yearsley, and many others. When a woman did bring out a book of poetry anonymously, it was often her first book, and her name appeared quickly on the title pages of subsequent editions and later volumes. This first book was a trial balloon, so to speak, a testing of the waters. Rose Lawrence’s *The Last Autumn at a Favorite Residence: With Other Poems* (1828) is illustrative. When the book’s second edition came out the following year, she acknowledged her authorship on the title page. (Feldman, 2002, 1)

This discerning ideology stirred feminist attitudes, and caused women to begin demanding their rights, whether legitimate, civil or social. Until then, women were treated as their husband’s property:

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything; and is therefore called in our law-French *e feme-covert foeminaviro co-operta*; is said to be covert baron, or under the protection and influence of her husband, her baron, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture. (Blackstone, 1826, 442)

However, the beginning of the century brought tremendous changes in politics, economics, and the social hierarchy, which delivered a better education for women, and a chance to escape the limitations of domestic literature. The changes raised women’s awareness of gender discrimination, and their oppressed role and position in the nineteenth-century society. In order to step on the male-dominated literary stage and stand together with the men, female authors had to use male pennames or write namelessly to avoid the disdainful judgments of critics. As the century progressed, women tried to break the social, political, and legal limitations which society imposed on them. “The works were called, a light, readable mixture of poems, stories, letters, and fashionable chit-chat ‘which meant that they were categorized as frivolous, trivial and unliterary” (Akabay, 1826, 372). Views from more culturally accepted standpoints are considered centre, but views from less accepted standpoints are at the margins as women.

In the nineteenth century an enormous number of women writers emerged because of the sensational changes of society following the industrial revolution. Numerous female authors expected to investigate sexual contrasts and reconfigure female subjectivities in their fiction, just as expound on the discussion of enlarging women’s chances of work, training, governmental issues and public rights. The female authors had various musings of what woman’s rights was however, and passed on them through their work in an assortment of ways. For example, a few authors demonstrated their disappointment and outrage towards society legitimately through their work, for example, Barrett Browning. Some were more indirect and had different perspectives on women’s liberation. In contrast, the works which stressed women’s

spiritual pre-eminence to men without just criticizing the existing gender roles were also received generally such as Cristiana Rossetti's *Goblin Market*, or Hanna More's structures on the *Modern System of Female Education* (1799). More's work influenced many women and was described as "addressing women of rank and fortune, on the effects of their influence on society" (Jordan, 2014, 49).

England established the Association for the Promotion of the Employment of Women to promote higher salaries and better working conditions for women in London in 1857. An education movement in the 19th century in America, England, and France led to more and better chances for women to apply their intellectual capabilities. Those in favour of women's educational reform claimed that professions and education outside of domestic duties would result in women marrying for love rather than obligation, and the choice to remain single would gain popularity, decreasing prostitution, which might lead men to desire marriage instead of lusting after women to fulfil selfish needs. The notion of silence has been foremost in the liberation of feminist struggles. Women's voices are kept silent from time to time. So, silence becomes an expression of femininity. Silence is given to describe women who felt torture from their suppression and oppression in the male dominated society. Their silence looks like the loudest voice.

CONCLUSIONS

Romanticism era was a new beginning in England that the power of England started from nobility community and continued to a new class of industrial manageress, and the common English people were in the group of industrial working class as well. In Romantic age, new events were happening in the world. The ideal of freedom was being renewal to every change of human struggle and that ideal to furbish through Europe. Individual thought, personal feelings and incomparable experience were new roles in Romantic poetry, and it knows the poet as a spokesman of society. This paper searching to examine how women writers and poets of Romantic period - "a new heaven", "The world's great age", another heart/and other pulses - were silenced and neglected to make sure about a spot among their male partners and their influence on English Literature.

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